

COALITION TO PRESERVE ROCKVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESSES 'ACTION PLAN'

(Presented February 23, 2008 to City of Rockville Mayor and Council)

Introduction

The U.S. economy declined steadily in 2008, as reflected in declining housing prices, increased foreclosures, decreased availability of both consumer and business loans, and other measures of economic strength – this decline has continued in 2009. In the past year, a number of Rockville retail/restaurant businesses have closed, including some long-established names such as Sam Woo; newer startups such as Lemon Tree and Stonefish Grill; and large chains such as Circuit City. Most economic forecasts conclude that this recession will last at least into 2010 and many predict that a recovery will not occur until 2011. It is against this backdrop the Coalition to Preserve Rockville Neighborhood Businesses is presenting this 'Action Plan' for consideration.

The Coalition to Preserve Rockville Neighborhood Businesses had its genesis in the November/December 2008 "Buy Rockville" campaign which was initiated and managed by Rockville Economic Development, Inc. (REDI) and presented to and supported by the Mayor and Council. The intent of that campaign was to raise awareness about the one-of-a-kind shops in Rockville, the need and opportunity to make a difference locally, and the contribution shopping locally makes to the greater good of the community, as well as to affect the choices residents were making on holiday spending. .

In January 2009, the Coalition to Preserve Rockville Neighborhood Businesses came together to discuss wider strategies to assist Rockville consumer businesses, and to formulate an 'Action Plan' to continue the momentum of the "Buy Rockville" campaign. The Coalition has met five times to date, and consists of representation from Rockville citizens, retail/restaurants, property owners/managers, the Rockville Chamber of Commerce, the City of Rockville, and Rockville Economic Development, Inc. (REDI), and has an open structure that welcomes new participants. It is led by the Rockville Chamber of Commerce.

The Coalition's goal and the goal of the 'Action Plan' are to engage the various 'stakeholders' (business, residents, employees & government) in a direct and meaningful way to help keep Rockville consumer-focused businesses viable during the current economic recession. The 'Action Plan' is an investment in our community.

In January and February, REDI fielded inquiries from Asheville, NC and Frederick, MD about the campaign, as those communities study implementing their own Buy Local efforts. At this point, Rockville is perceived as a leader in efforts to respond to the economic downturn. The Coalition believes that continued active effort on the part of the City and its businesses is crucial to preserve the quality of life in Rockville, and Rockville's reputation as a leading economic engine.

Services Offered

The Coalition will direct a coordinated effort ('Action Plan') to promote Rockville consumer-focused businesses, both business-to-consumer & business-to-business. The overall effort will consist of the following elements that have been identified as priorities:

- Continue to build the business list at www.BuyRockville.org so that it is more complete.
- Design/print flyers, posters, door hangers and other hard-copy materials promoting the "Buy Rockville" concept.
- Produce events and marketing campaigns to drive people to www.BuyRockville.org.
- Advertise via street banners, Metro signage, print media, etc.
- Work with existing media outlets for maximum exposure for the campaign.
- Provide the Rockville Mayor & Council with 'content' to assist them with promoting the campaign & the Rockville business community's viability.

Additional elements include:

- Create and print a detailed consumer map of Rockville retail businesses and restaurants.
- Establish a Consumer Rewards Program (Rockville Rewards).
- Organize special events, e.g. Rockville Restaurant Week.
- Negotiate the distribution of promotional materials into employees' paycheck envelopes, monthly rent bills (landlords), etc.
- Advertise in print and other media, and coordinate public relations.
- Collect consumer e-mail addresses for use in direct e-mail campaigns.
- Organize and/or publicize events to draw consumers to retail/restaurant venues, e.g., young professionals' progressive dinners, corporate nights, parading with pets, etc.

Management/Personnel

The Coalition believes that in order to implement the 'Action Plan', and for it to be effective, it will be necessary to hire a consulting firm (marketing professionals) to organize and coordinate the various components of the Plan and to work with Coalition and community members (volunteers). It is estimated that approximately 340 hours of consultant/contractor time will be required to implement the Plan.

Assistance with implementation of the Plan will be provided by members of the Coalition and other volunteers from the community. It is estimated that approximately 320 hours of volunteer (pro-bono) time will be required to implement the Plan.

Projected Costs

The projected cost to implement the 'Action Plan' is approximately \$56,000. This includes coordination, management, design, printing, production, etc. If the 'Action Plan' moves forward, funds will need to come from the private sector and the City of Rockville.

The Coalition is recommending that 50% of the revenue needed to implement the 'Action Plan' come from the private sector and 50% come from the City of Rockville.

If the 'Action Plan' moves forward, a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be sent to local consulting firms to manage the project. Upon selection of the consulting firm, the actual cost will be adjusted based on the winning bid. It is estimated the actual cost (vs. projected cost) will be plus or minus 10%.

Supplementing the projected costs will be pro-bono products and services provided by various companies and individuals, e.g. Comcast Spotlight.

Timeline

The implementation of the 'Action Plan' will take place over the course of 9-10 months and will depend on the commitment of funds. Ideally, implementation will begin in March/April to allow for printed materials and programs to be in place for spring and summer events in the City.

A more detailed timeline will be developed for various tasks and sub-tasks if the funds are committed and the 'Action Plan' moves forward.

Marketing Plan (Implementation)

The following Marketing Plan includes estimated time and materials for various tasks and sub-tasks. Coordination, management, design, printing, production, etc. are part of the projected costs. Material costs are estimated to be \$22,000 (includes purchased advertising) and contractor costs are estimated at \$34,000.

Task	Sub-Task	Time (in hours)	Materials Budget	Coordinating Organization
Coordinate the evaluation and implementation of the ongoing "Buy Rockville" campaign				Rockville Chamber of Commerce
	Develop and implement a measurement strategy for the Buy Rockville campaign	40	\$500.00 Printing of materials to support measurement tools	Contractor
	Coordinate monthly Coalition meetings	12	\$100.00 Printing of support materials for meetings	Contractor
	Prepare agenda for meetings, attend and summarize meetings	36		Contractor
	Coordinate efforts with partners	20		Contractor

Task	Sub-Task	Time (in hours)	Materials Budget	Coordinating Organization
	Maintain and update BuyRockville.org Website	40	\$500 Technician fees for website updates	Rockville Chamber
Coordinate public relations and advertising for the campaign				Contractor
	Draft and circulate for approval, at least four news releases in 2009. Submit news releases to local news organizations and follow-up.	10		Contractor
	Develop news story ideas; Coordinate meetings/phone calls with news reporters including follow-up.	40		Contractor
	Research and write at least 12 contributed articles for partner/ community publications. Coordinate submission and follow-up.	30		Contractor
	Obtain copies of publications for report	10	\$100.00 Purchase of publications	Contractor
	Write copy/design spring window signs for all businesses in Rockville.	5	\$2,500.00 Printing of window signage	Contractor
	Write copy/ design Twinbrook, Rockville, Shady Grove Metro spring station ads (4 weeks)	5	\$4,300.00 Printing of ads and purchase of advertising space at Metro stations	Contractor
	Write copy/design spring banner across Rockville Pike	5	\$3,000.00 Printing & installation of banner	Contractor
	Write copy/design advertising for 'Ride-On' bus traveling through Rockville (4 weeks)	5	\$2,000.00 Printing of ads and purchase of advertising space	Contractor

Task	Sub-Task	Time (in hours)	Materials Budget	Coordinating Organization
	Develop additional collateral pieces as needed for campaign, which may include car leaflets, handouts, door hangers	20	\$2,000.00 Printing of materials for distribution	Contractor
	Coordinate materials for City events including materials at Hometown Holidays, Farmers' Market, etc.	20	\$1,000.00 Printing of materials and 'hand-outs'	Rockville Chamber
	Distribution of materials/staff at events	20		Rockville Chamber
Coordinate the implementation of Rockville Shopping and Dining Guide Map, if pursued				Coalition to Preserve Rockville Neighborhood Businesses
	Coordinate with map-making company	20	expense to be covered through advertising dollars	Contractor
Research and implement a 'Rockville Rewards' program				Coalition to Preserve Rockville Neighborhood Businesses
	Research feasibility of program and best practices	20	\$100.00 Purchase of research materials.	Contractor
	Coordinate/promote program to Rockville Businesses	80		Rockville Chamber
	Develop supporting materials/collateral	22	\$3,300.00 Printing of materials for Rewards Program	Contractor
	Promote Rockville Rewards program	40		Rockville Chamber
Research and implement a 'Rockville Restaurant Week'				Coalition to Preserve Rockville Neighborhood Businesses

Task	Sub-Task	Time (in hours)	Materials Budget	Coordinating Organization
	Research feasibility of program and best practices	20	\$100.00 Purchase of research materials	Contractor
	Coordinate/promote program to Rockville Businesses	80		Rockville Chamber
	Develop supporting materials/collateral	20	\$2,500.00 Printing of materials for 'Restaurant Week'	Contractor
	Promote Rockville Restaurant Week	40		Rockville Chamber
TOTAL		660	\$22,000.00	
TOTAL TIME		660		
Volunteer Time		320		
Contractor Time		340	\$34,000.00	
TOTAL MATERIALS			\$22,000.00	
TOTAL ESTIMATED BUDGET			\$56,000.00	